

# New Mexico Skies Guest Observatory

## our skies . . .



There are lots of variables that impact the quality of your night sky observing. We believe that New Mexico Skies has an

exceptional set of sky conditions that will take your breath away.

The "dark" at New Mexico Skies: Our skies are dark! New Mexico Skies is located 16 miles from the "nearby" village of Cloudcroft (population 592). We are 32 miles from Alamogordo, New Mexico, the Otero County seat, which has fewer than 40,000 residents and is located on the other side of the mountains from us. The nearest big city is El Paso, Texas, (100+ miles, and it is two mountain ranges away.

Alamogordo has one of the strictest light pollution ordinances in the United States. If you fly over Alamogordo at night, it is almost invisible, so effective is its battle against night destroying light. The law is enforced! The State of New Mexico takes light pollution seriously too. On April 6th, 1999, Governor Gary Johnson signed the nation's strictest state anti-light pollution legislation.

Many of our guests and astronomer neighbors (our mountain top is an astronomical enclave) regularly view skies with limiting naked eye magnitudes of 7+.

The "transparency" of our skies is phenomenal. Our 7,300' altitude puts you well above most of the atmospheric borne pollution and particulate matter. The Sacramento Mountains are on the "high desert" and our skies benefit from the clean, dry air associated with desert environments. Fog is very rare. Airborne pollen content is usually low.

The "seeing" qualities of our skies are among the best you will find anywhere. Our neighbors at Apache Point Observatory, home of the Sloan Sky Survey, 15 air miles away over the mountains, overlooking Alamogordo, monitors seeing regularly. Their web site frequently reports star images smaller than FWHM one arc-second. Our own experience has shown the seeing is nearly always better than two arc-seconds and often is indeed sub arc-second.

A word about the weather: Though we are located in the warm desert Southwest, south of 33 degrees North latitude, our transparent night skies and high altitude can make for pretty chilly nights. Winter night temperatures can drop into the twenties or even the teens. The quality of the winter skies makes them worth the effort of warm winter dressing.

Summer nighttime temperatures are usually in the 50-70 degree F. range. Observing from our wind shielding domes is usually very comfortable, but be prepared for chilly weather.

Though our temperatures, precipitation and winds are all significantly more moderate than those at Apache Point Observatory, their 20+ year record of weather measurements is a useful tool for planning your visit.